Some Thoughts on Musical Instruments as Household Furniture.

There will be found in the present number of the Gospel Messenger, an article on "Instrumental Music and its Effects," by brother John Harshbarger. We make the article the occasion of some remarks. It is not however, with the design of opposing the views advanced by brother Harshbarger, that we write. A good many of our brethren see no evil in having musical instruments in their houses. The subject has been frequently before our Anunal Meeting, and there discussed, but with all the discussion there is at this time a difference of opinion among the brethren in regard to the subject of instrumental music, as there is upon other subjects. And we, perhaps, need not be surprised that there is a difference of opinion among the Brethren, concerning musical instruments. Our education, our associations, our habits of thought, and the constitution of our minds, all have much to do with our ideas of many things, and among those things that of instrumental music. Where there is no plain, divine law upon a subject, and where the arguments to prove the evil character of a thing are not very strong and conclusive, upon such a subject, a difference of opinion will be likely to be obtained. So we regard the case of musical instruments.

It surely requires plain arguments to prove that instrumental music is now a sin, as it once was used in the service of God, and as it was so much used and enjoyed by David in his devotions, and also commanded by him to be used by others, and also since it used to represent the happiness of the redeemed in heaven. That instrumental music has met with the encouragement above indicated, is proved by following testimonies:

1. It was used in the service of God. "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy." 1 Chron. 15:16.

2. It is well known by all the readers of the Psalms, that David used instruments of music in his devotion, and evidently enjoyed the music very much. He thus expresses himself in the forty-third psalm: "Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God." Ps. 43;3, 4.

3. David also commanded others to praise the Lord with an instrument of music.—"Praise the Lord with a harp; sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings." Ps. 33:2.

4 Instrumental music is also represented as being used by the redeemed in heaven, as expressing and promoting their happiness.—"And I saw," says John, "as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Rev. 15:2, 3.

If we then take into consideration the use that has been made of musical instruments by the pious and the reference that is made to them in the Scriptures, and finding no plain prohibition of them, or even plain disapproval of them in the gospel, if any of us have no enjoyment in music, or think it best to have no musical instrument in our houses we should be careful that we do not, in an arbitrary way, seek to enforce our views or convictions upon others. Brother Harshberger refers to the use of musical instruments in worship, and contrasts the worship of the Jewish dispensation which had instrumental music in it, with the worship of the Christian dispensation, which is to be performed in spirit and in truth. The question whether David did not worship in spirit and in truth, when he used his harp in worship, is one to which it might not be amiss to give some attention.

But we should bear in mind that when our brethren desire the liberty to have musical instruments, it is not that they may have them in their meeting-houses to worship with them, but that they may have them in their houses for the entertainment and gratification of such that are entertained and gratified by them. And if we can, by the use of sacred music upon an instrument, have their devotional feelings improved, we presume it would not be wrong to use the instrument for this purpose. But it is not for the purpose of worship directly, that the use of it is desired by the brethren. It is for the entertainment and gratification of what we consider lawful desires. There are lawful desires and appetites that are to be gratified in moderation, and we are inclined to believe that the desire for music may be clased among these. Whether we should attempt to prohibit any in gratifying their lawful desires in moderation, or whether the church should attempt it, is a question worthy of our consideration, and one that should be looked at in the light of the liberty of the gospel. There is a certain degree of liberty granted by the gospel to believers. This liberty is plainly inculcated by the Apostle Paul, in the 13th. chapter of Romans. The following plain and expressive language is here used:

"Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth: for God has received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Such are the ideas that are inculcated throughout the chapter. But we must understand that the liberty the apostle maintains, refers to things upon which there is no divine law given, and in which there is no sin. In regard to things of that character, Christians must exercise their enlightened judgements and act accordingly. In view of the fact that such a principle of liberty is contained in the gospel, it is not at all advisable that Christians should labor to bring about a perfect uniformity in every particular, in regard to what they eat, and drink, and wear, and in regard to many of their habits and enjoyments of life. There are certain principles which must be faithfully and universally applied. Among these are temperance, frugality, plainness, self-denial, and godliness. In many casses, each individual member must decide what these principles require. One member cannot decide for another, neither can the church always decide. "Let a man examine himself." We say in many cases, we must be our own judges, and we shall be held accountable for the decisions of our judgments and for the results of them.

If individual members cannot decide for themselves, whether it is lawful for them to have a musical instrument for the entertainment and gratification of themselves or families, and if the church claims the right to decide it for them, may not the church have something to say in regard to entertainment and gratification furnished by its members in the abundance and luxuries of the table? But the church has not hitherto assumed the authority to decide what its members shall eat and drink. When we consider the excessive indulgence in eating that is often witnessed, and the damaging effect of such eating upon the health of those who so indulge, and the expense in providing for such indulgence, the question might, with propriety, be asked, whether the gratification of the palate or taste, as is frequently indulged, is not as objectionable on Christian principles, as the gratifying of the instrumental music? And while there is a difference in the things themselves, that is in sitting down to a table loaded with luxuries, merely to gratify the appetite, and in sitting down to enjoy the feeling produced by musical instruments, yet the principle may not be so different, and we think it is not.

The expense of musical instruments is frequently made an objection to them. But admitting more good could be done by appropriating money to benevolent and charitable purposes, than in purchasing musical instruments, the question is, would the money that is spent for such instruments be devoted to charitable purposes if it were not spent for musical instruments? And another question may be asked, Do not those brethren, who have musical instruments, do quite as much in proportion to their number, in charitable contributions, as those who have none?

We hope there will be no occasion hereafter for bringing such questions as that concerning the right of brethren to have musical instruments in their houses, to our A. M. There are certain subjects, like that of instrumental music, of avoidance, of lightning rods, of voting, and of higher education, concerning which a difference of opinion, obtains among the brethren, and concerning which a difference of opinion will be likely to continue. Upon these subjects, our old brethren of former years differed, and they discussed them, but without coming to a oneness of mind concerning them, and it is not likely that the brethren of the present time can do what those of former times failed to do.

We are more than ever impressed with the improprity of perplexing ourselves, and disturbing the peace of our Brotherhood with the vain attempt to bring about a perfect oneness in everything. We entertain the idea that the trouble that has so seriously affected and afflicted our beloved Brotherhood, grew out of the idea that some of our brethren held that there should be a perfect oneness among us—a greater uniformity than the gospel requires, or than our nature in our present state is capable. Things of this character were brought to our A. M., and from a desire to gratify some few brethren, they were discussed, and time was spent upon them, and the result had no tendency to promote the the peace and prosperity of the peace and prosperty of the church, bnt rather discord, strife, and division. And we have the joy arising from "the testimony of our conscience," that we endeavored, to the extent of our feeble ability, to discourage the introduction of such matters into our Annual Councils.

We are confirmed in our view that we should bear with one another in holding some different opinions upon some subjects, from what has taken place since the divisions have occurred in the Brotherhood. The division in Maryland, which led several brethren to go off from the Brotherhood with the Miami Separatists, was owing, in some degree, and perhaps to a considerable degree, to a baptism that was performed by one of our brethren. There was a lady that was taken sick, and who had neglected her duty while in health, and when near death, she became greatly concerned and desired to be baptized. But such was her extreme weakness, and such were her surroundings, that she could only be baptized in a vessel in the house. To ease the troubled mind of the dying lady, this was done. To this, decided exception was taken by some, and especially by an elder. He could not be reconciled to the baptism above alluded to, and he went off with the Miami Separatists.

Sometime ago a similar baptism was performed by one of the body, to which the elder above alluded to, had joined himself, and the *Vindicator* of the September issue acknowledges the baptism, and has nothing to say against it. We thus perceive there is a difference of opinion tolerated in the body of the Miama Separatists, many of whom when yet with us, contended for a uniformity of sentiment, which they did not attain unto then, neither have they attained unto it in their new organization.

Then, as we cannot reasonably expect an entire uniformity of opinion in the church in such things as we have been noticing, instead of laboring for, and expecting such a uniformity, let us labor for more of the Holy Spirit, some of whose fruits are love, forbearance, and self-denial, that, possessing these, we may not too highly value our own opinions, bear with those who differ with us, and "love one another with a pure heart fervently."

We say again, we have not written to oppose brother Harsbarger's views. We know him, and we love him. He is, no doubt, sincere in his convictions. And we readily accord to him the liberty of entertaining his views. We have no censure to pass on any who hold such views, but knowing as we do, what has resulted from an indiscreet agitation and pressing of such subjects as that to which special attention has been given in this article, as well as to others we have alluded to,—subjects upon which brethren have always differed, we have felt it our duty to make the foregoing suggestions, that we may use discretion, and not permit the discussion of such subjects, or the way in which we may dispose of them, to disturb the peace of the church, or the loveand fellowship of brethren.—JAMES QUINTER *in Gospel Messenger.*

The Waldenses.

There are two theories in regard to the origin and the name of those Christians who, for centuries, in the valleys of the Alps, repudiated the authority and defied the power of the Papacy. John Leger, in his history of the Vaudois churches, contends that they can trace their origin back as far at least as the fourth century. He thinks the name Vaudois, or Waldenses, is derived from the valleys (in their language *vaux*) in which they lived. Being free mountaineers, and far away from the corrupting influences of Rome, they preserved the gospel in its purity, as taught them by the apostles or their successors.

This is one theory. But it is regarded as untenable by some of the ablest writers on church history. They claim that the Waldenses owe their existence and name to one Peter Waldo, of Lyons, France, who lived in the twelfth century. This Peter, who was born at Vaux, or Valdum, near Lyons, and hence was called, according to the custom of those days, Peter Valdensis, or Valdian, was a wealthy merchant, and also a very pious man. Having obtained from a priest of Lyons a translation of the Gospels into French, and studied them with great care, he became convinced that the religion taught to the people by the Romish Church differed altogether from that which Jesus Christ taught. So, earnestly desiring to follow Christ, and to secure salvation, he distributed all his property among the poor, and associating other pious men with him, began to preach the gospel in its purity. Of course he was opposed and persecuted by the Romish hierarchy. But the people had lost faith in the priests. They were hungering for something better than penances and indulgences. They heard these new preachers gladly. Multitudes joined them. In a very short time "the heresy," as it was called, spread all over Europe.

The great effort of the Waldenses was to reform the church. They did not propose to leave it. On the contrary, Peter Waldo himself, in 1172, sent two of his followers to the Council of the Lateran, who presented to the pope a copy of his translations from the Old and New Testaments, with notes and expositions of his own, and requested permission to preach and instruct the people. Alexander III., however, refused this request and forbade his preaching. A similar request was presented to the next Pope, but without success. And in the year 1184, just seven hundred years ago, these lovers of the Bible were publicly excommunicated.

Being thus cut off from the church of Rome, the Waldenses organized according to the apostolic model of the church as they found it in the New Testament. They elected bishops, presbyters and deacons. But all these officers were to be like the original disciples of Christ, not only poor, but unlearned men. They all were to support themselves by the labor of their hands, as Paul did. The people, or laity, were divided into two classes, *the perfect* and *the imperfect*. The former gave up all their property, lived in abject poverty, and emaciated their bodies by frequent fasting. The latter lived like other people, yet very plainly. The Waldenses repudiated the Romish priesthood, with its masses, confessionals, penances and indulgences. They claimed that sins were to be confessed by Christians to one another, and not to priests or bishops; and that absolution was to be received directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from him only. They did not believe in purgatory, or prayer for the dead, or the intercession of saints and the virgin Mary. Indeed, they were Protestants in the full meaning of the word long before Luther. They interpreted the Scriptures litterally, especially the Sermon on the Mount. Hence they disapproved of wars (even in self-defense), of lawsuits, of judicial oaths, and of any effort to acquire wealth. They were strict in their morals, blameless in their lives, zealous and fearless in proclaiming what they believed to be the truth of God and essential to the salvation of men.

Of course Rome persecuted these godly men. Their pure lives were a constant reproach of the avarice and sensuality of the priests. So, hunted in all lands with fire and sword, they were driven into the clefts of the rocks. There they clung, like the mosses, and preserved the Christian faith in its purity, when nearly all the rest of the world was worshipping the woman upon the scarlet-colored beast (Rev. xvii. 16).

But the Waldenses did not stay always in their mountain fastnesses. They would traverse Italy and France as peddlers of silks and other costly goods. Yet each had copies of the Scriptures concealed in his pack, to be sold whenever he could do so safely. Many a lady in her boudoir obtained in this way the word of God, interdicted by the priests. The seed thus widely scattered for many years germinated in secret, and its growth and fruitage appeared in the era of the Protestant Reformation. Only God himself can trace the influence of this humble, pious, patient and self denying Vaudois in preparing the way for Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, and their co-laborers.

The Waldenses still flourish in the Piedmontese Alps. They are probably more like the primitive Christians than any other portion of the church to-day. They are no longer persecuted, but are welcomed in all the cities of Italy. They are taking a prominent part in evangelizing the united kingdom. Their history is a profitable study for the Christians of this generation; for it illustrates the vitality of true piety, and the power of the bible to keep a people pure and free amid abounding corruption and degradation. No wonder the Romish hierarchy withheld the Bible from the people. It was the only way they could keep them in spiritual bondage. An open Bible amid the rocky ravines of the mountains kindled a light there which was the morning star of the new day that dawned upon Europe and the world in the sixteenth century.

C. E. B.

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